

Claims

[c1] 1.A method of approving a document comprising:
storing the document in a central storage area, the storage area preventing
alteration or modification of the document;
advising an approver that the document requiring approval is accessible for
review and approval;
allowing the approver to review the document;
prompting approval by the approver;
recording the date of approval; and
recording the approved document.

[c2] 2.A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising the step of generating
an approval log.

[c3] 3.A method as recited in claim 2 further comprising associating the approval
log with a unique file record.

[c4] 4. A method as recited in claim 3 further comprising processing the approval
log into an XML file.

[c5] 5.A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising multiple approvers
approving a document and recording each approver's approval.

[c6] 6.A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the advising step comprises
providing an email to the approver and proving a hyperlink to the document.

[c7] 7.A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the document is selected from a
group consisting of a patent application, a trademark application, an
assignment document and a power of attorney.

[c8] 8.A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising the step of allowing
access to the central storage area to view the approval record.

[c9] 9.A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising displaying approval text
to the approver and storing this approval text in the central storage area.

[c10] 10. A method of hosting a docketing system on an internet accessible server comprising:
authenticating the identity of a user that logs into a client-based authentication program;
directing the user to the server; and
encrypting the transmissions between the server and the user.

[c11] 11. A method as recited in claim 10 and further comprising transmitting a digital certificate from the client-based authentication program to the docketing system, determining the authenticity of the digital certificate and allowing access to the docketing system for authorized users.

[c12] 12. A method as recited in claim 10 and further comprising transmitting the IP address of the client-based authentication program to the docketing system, and allowing access to the docketing system for authorized IP addresses.

[c13] 13. A method as recited in claim 10 and further comprising obtaining user identifying information from a directory server and transmitting the user identifying information to the docketing system.

[c14] 14. A method as recited in claim 13 and further comprising storing the user identifying information on the user's computer and the docketing system reading the stored information.

[c15] 15. A method of transferring data between a first computer having a first database and a second computer having a second database comprising:
directing the first computer to email the second computer a notice containing a hyperlink that a message is pending;
directing the second computer to communicate with the first computer using the hyperlink;
directing the first computer to query the first database and prepare an XML file containing the transferring data; and
transferring an XML file from the first computer to the second computer, the

XML file containing the transferring data.

- [c16] 16. A method as recited in claim 15 and further comprising parsing the XML file into records that are stored in the second database.
- [c17] 17. A method as recited in claim 15 and further comprising notifying a user that the data transfer has occurred.
- [c18] 18. A method as recited in claim 15 wherein the first computer is a USPTO computer and the second computer is a recipient of a USPTO office action.
- [c19] 19. A method as recited in claim 18 wherein the transferring data is a USPTO office action.
- [c20] 20. A method of citing references as part of an electronic submission process comprising the steps of:
recording a citation to the reference in a docketing system;
recording a method to retrieve the cited reference from an internet accessible computer;
exporting the citation and retrieval method as an XML file; and
transferring the XML file as part of the electronic submission process.
- [c21] 21. A method as described in claim 20 wherein the retrieval method is a URL.
- [c22] 22. A method as described in claim 20 wherein the electronic submission process is a patent application.
- [c23] 23. A method as described in claim 20 wherein the reference is stored on an internet accessible server.